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Harkin said he would continue to pressure Schaeffer to release CRP land to grow hay.

Culver agreed that Monday's announcement "must be an initial, and not a final step."

"I encourage the U.S. Department of Agriculture to immediately release Conservation

last week," Culver said in a statement. "By doing so, we will reduce costs for livestock

producers, and help lowa continue to feed the world."

Reserve Program lands for both haying and grazing, just as Sec. Northey and I asked for

"The recent flooding and excessive rainfall have adversely impacted each sector of agriculture in the Midwest," Harkin said in a statement. "Crops have been lost, but now we

are seeing a shortage of feed availability coupled with high feed prices, which could

jeopardize the survival of many producers this year. That's why access to CRP land,

carefully done, is so critical.

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The bulk of the land included is in Iowa, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Indiana and Illinois, key farming states that all bore the brunt of severe weather this spring.

Other states include Colorado, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Virginia and West Virginia. In Kentucky, the affected counties are Boone, Gallatin, Carroll, Henderson, Trimble and Union.

Under the Conservation Reserve Program, the USDA pays farmers to leave erodible cropland or other environmentally sensitive areas idle to prevent erosion. Strict conditions are typically set on the land's use, although opening it for grazing and other purposes is not unprecedented.

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